

## Vishnu Idols Discovered from the Region of Valmiki Nagar (West Champaran District, Bihar)

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**Abstract:** Bihar Was the Rich State In Art Remains And Religions Harmony. West Champaran District Situated Between 26°81\*N And 84°51\*E. West Champaran Was A Religious for Vaishnava, Shaiva, Shkta, Budhism And Saur Communities. Present Paper is Based on Vishnu Sclupture of Valmiki Nagar Area of West Champaran District.

Among the five sects of the Brahmanical religion, the worshippers of Vishnu belonging to the Vaishnav sect have a special significance. Within the Brahmin idols, Vishnu holds an important place, who has been worshipped with reverence and devotion since the Vedic age till today. Vishnu is one of the major deities among the Vedic gods and goddesses. Within the Puranic concept of *tridevas*, Vishnu is the preserver of the world but the Bhagvad and Vaishnav sect has distinguished Vishnu as the supreme deity. In fact, the imagery of Vishnu has been the culmination of the combined worship of Vasudeva-Krishna, the Vedic solar deity Vishnu and the Narayana of the Brahmin scriptures. The preservation and the creation of Puranas by the Gupta rulers, who were followers of the Bhagvat cult, resulted in a great increase in Vishnu's reputation and his various forms developed. This is evident from the narrative of Brahma being born from the lotus emerging from the naval of Vishnu who is sleeping on Sheshnag. In the Puranas, Vishnu is said to be the cause of the creation, preservation and destruction of the world.

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## INTRODUCTION

In the Gita, the importance of Vishnu is revealed through the concept of the great forms of Vishnu. Avatarism Pancharatra is an important contribution of the Bhagavata or the Vaishnav sect. The seed of Avatarism of the Bhagvat sect is available in the later Vedic literature. The earliest mention of Avatarism is found in the Shatapatha Brahmana and the Taittiriya Samhitawhere it is said that Prajapati incarnated as Matsya, Kurma and Varaha on various occasions for the benefit of the world (Banerjee: 1956:389). Indian expression related to Avatarism is found in Bhagavad Gita and Matsya Purana.

*Yada-Yadahi Dharmasya Glanirbhavati Bharata  
Abhyutthanam Adharmasya Tadatmanam Srijamayaham  
Paritranaaya Sadhunaamuinnasaya Cha Duskritam*

*Dharam- Samsthapanarthaya Sambhavami Yuge- Yuge.  
(Sri Madbhagwat Gita 4-7,8)*

*Matsyankurmavarahashchanarasimhotwaman  
Shamo Ramashcha, Krishnaschabuddha Kalischalhedesah.  
(Matsya Purana 2-16)*

Three lists of incarnations of Vishnu are found in the Bhagavata Purana. Their number is 22 in the first list, 23 in the second and 14 in the third. At the same time, in Varaha Purana, a common list of ten avatars is found (Srivastava 2010: 23-24). The ten incarnations of Vishnu can be divided into three classes based on form.

1. Animal Incarnation- Matsya, Kurma, Varaha
2. Human Incarnation- Vaman, Ram, Krishna, Balaram, Buddh, Kalki
3. Composite or Mixed Incarnation- Narsinh

Pusalkar has divided these avatars into three parts according to their social status chronology (Pusalkar 1963: 12).

1. Religious Incarnations- The five incarnations of Matsya, Koorm, Varaha, Narasimha and Vamana are limited under religious incarnations.
2. Historic Incarnations- Four incarnations - Parashurama, Rama, Krishna and Buddha included under historical incarnations.
3. Future Incarnation- The future avatar includes the Kalki avatar.

Vaishnavism has a very important place in the Hindu sect. The Vaishnava idol is revered throughout India as well as in the other places of the world. West Champaran district has been a religious place for the Vaishnava, Shaiva, Shakta, and Buddhist along with other sects. The research paper presented is based on the study of Vaishnava idols obtained from the Valmiki Nagar area of West Champaran district.

In the Vaishnava Dasavatar, the incarnations of Vishnu are divided into three classes.

1. Purna Avatar
2. Aavesh Avatar
3. Ansh Avatar

There is a scientific mystery within this ordered division of the avatar. It is acceptable in the religious world that there is no specific expression of God. They are born in all kinds of species, from small to high. The second poignant fact is that in this sequence, the principle of scientific development theory is also hidden. The sequence of evolution of the universe begins with aphrodisiacs (unicellular) and is gradually overwhelmed by the living beings. Similarly, the God of Avatarism descended on earth. Matsyavatar as the first developmental life in the form of aquatic fish, Kumaravatar as a living creature (amphibians) on both water and land sites, Varaha incarnation as a living creature (terrestrial) after renunciation of water, Narasimha Avatar as an animal while trying to walk on two legs, Vamana avatar as an underdeveloped human being, physically developed and intellectual development as the embodiment of Parashurama, Rama avatar with rich cerebral and human qualities (having tolerance,

religion, kindness etc.), very high development of cerebral qualities and politics, philosophy, art, logic, etc. in the form of Krishna avatar, the only rationalist who instead of using his force was full of compassion, friendship and grace was the Buddha avatar and last, a fully developed man that will incarnate in future as Kalki avatar can be understood in scientific order. From the scientific point of view, avatarism is considered as a symbol of the development of the universe.

Along with India, the roots of God taking incarnations run deep. Egyptian, Babylonian, Assyrian, Hebrew, Greece, China, Africa, America, and Australia's semi-civilized and civilized peoples consider that gods incarnate (Srivastav 2010: 24). In fact, the secret of the world appears hidden in these incarnations. The first four incarnations contained information about creation of the world. On the basis of Vayupurana (Vayupurana 1950 : 98/71, 117), Roopmandanam (Roopmandanam 1996: 3/24-28) and other literary texts, it can be said that there are ten major incarnations of Vishnu - Matsya, Kurma, Varaha, Narasimha, Vamana (Trivikram), Persuram, Ram, Krishna, Buddha and Kalki). Collective and independent statues of all incarnations of Vishnu are not found prior to the Kushan period. In the Kushan period, sculptures of Varaha, Krishna and Balarama began to be made (Tiwari and Giri 1997:80). Under the protection of Vaishnavism patronizing rulers in the Gupta period, the notion of Avtarism became more powerful. In the Gupta period, the Dashavatara idols of Vishnu were built in the form of Varaha, Narasimha, Vamana, Rama, Balarama and Krishna on a large scale (Srivastav 2010:26). Even after the Gupta period, between 7th and 13th century AD, in almost all the areas, the idols of Dashavatar panels and avatar forms were made.

Among the Puranic Tridevas (Brahma, Vishnu, Mahesh), Vishnu is called the preserver of the world. In the perception of the idol of Trimurti, Vishnu's form is important. Vishnu is the sattvic element of the cosmopolitan form of the universe, whose main duties are amalgamation, retention, centralization and protection. Vishnu has been given an important place in Brahmin statues. From the Vedic age to the present, there is no uniformity in the forms of Vishnu. Among the Vedic deities, Vishnu is considered as the solar deity (Upadhyay 1982: 61).

It would have taken many centuries for Vishnu to be revered as the supreme deity in the Bhagavata or Vaishnava sect. The merger of three independently recognized streams led to the creation of the god Vishnu, the head of the Bhagavata sect. In these three independent streams, the first section was the form of Vedic Vishnu, the second was the Narayana of the Brahmins and the Aranyakas and the third stream was of the worshiper of Vasudeva Shri Krishna of the Satvat dynasty. Five forms of Vishnu are considered in the evolved form of Bhagavata sect (Srivastav 2010: 12)-

**First – Par form**, it signifies the highest form of Vishnu.

**Second- Vyuh form**, this is the marvellous form of Vishnu.

**Third- Vibhav form**, it is related to the incarnation of Vishnu.

**Fourth- Antaryami form**, this form is invisible and remains in the heart of devotees.

**Fifth- Archa form**, it is related to deity form (idolatry).

Based on their postures, the statues of Vishnu are divided into three sub-classes –

1. Sthanak idols
2. Aasantha idols
3. Shayan idols

After the surveys in West Champaran district, the statues of Vishnu are found. The first Sthanak statue of Vishnu is marked on the coin of Panchal ruler Vishnumitra (1st AD) (Joshi 1977: 73). The single idol of Vishnu is represented in Brihatsamhita, Vishnudharmottara Purana and various Puranas

and Shilpashastras. In these texts, Vishnu is generally described as having four hands and is adorned with Shrivatsa or Kaustubhamani and Kiritmukut and rides on Garud. He carries Conch, Chakra, Mace and Padma in his hands. According to the Vishnudharmottara Purana, the lower right and left hands of Vishnu will be located on the foreheads of Gada Devi and Chakra Purush respectively. In the Agni Purana, there is a law for the representation of Padmadharini Sri and Veenadharini on the sides of Vishnu (Tiwari and Giri 1997: 80). The Dashavatara and Sthanaka statues of Vishnu are mainly derived from the city of Valmiki Nagar.

Valmiki Nagar site is situated on the international border of India-Nepal which lies in the dense forest of Valmiki Nagar Tiger Project, which is 4 km north-east to Bhaisalotan situated on Bagaha-Bhaisalotan route. Sonaha River which is a tributary of river Narayani flows through this site. Main feature of this river is that local residents sieve gold from this river. In a survey, ruins of temples dating back in between of 5<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> century were found, also including the idols of *Mahishasurmardini*, the *ten incarnations of Vishnu*, *Navagraha* and the stationed *Vishnu* inscribed on black basalt stone. During the course of the survey, the idols of stationed *Vishnu* and the *ten incarnations of Vishnu* have been found, and is described below:

Site : Valmiki Nagar  
 Medium : Black Basalt Stone  
 Idol : Stationed Vishnu (pic 1)  
 Age : 10<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> century A.D.

This four-armed idol of Vishnu is inscribed on a stone slab made of black basalt stone. Only one arm of this four-armed Vishnu is in proper condition (left) and the rest three are not found. The god with stationed posture is shown holding kiritmukut, kundal, necklace, sacred thread, garlands made from forest flowers, lingerie, divine jewel or mani, belt and shell in the left hand. The size of Prabhamandal is of equal to the Chakra. The garland is shown squirming through both the shoulders to below the knees. On the lateral side of the idle Saraswati in treble position is shown and on the southern lateral the notation of Lakshmi. The servents are inscribed in greeting posture alongside the foot of these two goddesses. A scholar is shown above the idol.

Site : Valmiki Nagar  
 Medium : Black Basalt Stone  
 Idol : Stationed Vishnu (demolished)(pic 2)  
 Age : 7<sup>th</sup> – 9<sup>th</sup> century A.D.

Shells and Chakra is inscribed on the base of the stationed Vishnu. The other right hand of Vishnu is graced in Varadamudra. Devi Lakshmi and Sarswati are constructed in stationed worshipping posture on the both left and right side of Vishnu. Wearing crown on the head, kundal in the ears, garland in the neck and lingerie on the lower body.

This four-armed idol of Vishnu is constructed on a podium made of black basalt stone. This idol is completely unbroken.

## VISHNUMAVAHAYSHYAMI SHANKHA CHAKRAGADADHARAM

Vishnu is portrayed wearing crown, necklace, Capricorn/fish lookalike earrings, sacred thread (Janeu), garlands, lower body cloth (Dhoti), armlet, divine jewel (Kaustubhmani) and waistband along with shell and Chakra in two left hands and mace in one of the two right hands with the other right hand being in Abhay Mudra (meditating gesture). On the upper portion of the idol, scholars are positioned on

both the side and Saraswati in Tribhang position of its lateral side, and Lakshmi on its southern lateral side. Anklets are portrayed in the legs. Servants are portrayed greeting near these both goddesses. Podium of the idol is completely orientated.

Site : Valmiki Nagar  
 Medium : Black Basalt Stone  
 Idol : Stationed Vishnu(Pict 3)  
 Age : 10<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> century A.D

Presented idol is a stationed idol of four-armed Vishnu built on a black basalt stone podium. This idol shows Vishnu sitting in the stationed position on Lotus wearing crown on his head, Capricorn/fish lookalike earrings, necklace, the sacred thread (Janeu), garlands, lower body cloth (Dhoti), armlet, divine jewel (Kaustubhmani) and waistband. Lord Vishnu is portrayed possessing Lotus and Shell in the right hand and Mace and Chakra in the left. The garland is shown squirming through both the shoulders to below the knees. On the lateral side or the left side of the idol, goddess Saraswati is presented on the Lotus in a worshipping position and goddess Lakshmi in a stationed position on a Lotus along with several other worshippers.

Site : Valmiki Nagar  
 Medium : Black Basalt Stone  
 Idol : Stationed Vishnu(Pic 4)  
 Age : 10<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> century A.D

In the presented idol, Vishnu is portrayed in the stationed posture wearing a crown, earrings, necklace, the sacred thread (Janeu), garlands, lower body cloth (Dhoti), armlet, divine jewel (Kaustubhmani) and waistband. The god is shown possessing Mace and Garland of Rudraksh (Akshmalā) in the right hands whereas Shell and Chakra in the left hands. Goddess Lakshmi is portrayed worshipping on the right side of the lower part of the idol and Goddess Saraswati on the left side. Along with the goddesses, servants are also portrayed below the idol. They are presented playing an instrument similar to drum.

Site : Valmiki Nagar  
 Medium : Black Basalt Stone  
 Idol : Stationed Vishnu(Pic 5)  
 Age : 10<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> century A.D

Presented idol is engraved on a podium. The god portrayed in a divisional stationed position (Picture 6) is portrayed wearing a crown, a leaf lookalike earrings, necklace, the sacred thread (Janeu), garlands, lower body cloth (Dhoti), armlet and waistband. In the two right hands of Vishnu he is possessing Mace and Shell, and in the two left hands he has Lotus and Chakra. In this idol Vishnu is portrayed sitting on the eagle in stationed position. Anklets are portrayed in the legs of Vishnu. On the lateral or the left side of God Vishnu, Saraswati is portrayed in the Tribhang position and Goddess Lakshmi is portrayed on the right side in worshipping position. On the southern lateral side of the God his animal incarnations are portrayed (below to above) Matsyaavatar, Kurmavatar, Varahavatar, Narsinhavatar. Like this his man incarnations are portrayed from above to below on his lateral side, Parshuram, Raam, Balraam, Krishna, Buddha and Kalki. Every human incarnation is portrayed in stationed position other than Buddha and Kalki. Buddha is portrayed in meditating position (Aasan Mudra) whereas Kalki is portrayed ascending the horse. Both the lateral side presenting god of is seen ascending garland. Both the scholars ascending garland on the lateral side of the idol is presented flying. Lion is also engraved on the ride side bottom of the idol.

Site : Valmiki Nagar  
 Medium : Black Basalt Stone  
 Idol : Stationed Vishnu(Pic 6)  
 Age : 11<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> century A.D

Presented idol in engraved on a podium. The god portrayed in Sambhang stationed position (Picture 7) has halo like a Chakra and is wearing crown, earrings, necklace, divine jewel (Kaustubhmani), sacred thread (Janev), garland, armlet, lower body cloth (Dhoti) and waistband. One right arm of this four-armed idol is fragmented while the other right arm carries Mace and the left arms carry Chakra and Shell. Anklets are portrayed in the legs of Vishnu. Goddess Saraswati is on the left part of the god while the right part is not clear. Possibly goddess Lakshmi is described here. Servants are portrayed in greeting position near both the goddesses. On the southern lateral part of the God (right part) the animal incarnations of god is portrayed from below to above, Matsyavtaar, Kurmavtaar, Varahavtaar and Narsinhavtaar. Like this the human incarnations of the god is portrayed from above to below namely Parshuram, Raam, Balraam, Krishna, Buddh and Kalki. The scholars present on both the lateral sides of the God are portrayed carrying garland while flying.

In the course of a survey of Valmiki Nagar an independent idol of the Incarnations of Vishnu is discovered. In the independent idol found, the idol of Varahavtaar is of much significance and importance, which is described below.

## VARAHAVTAAR

Varahavtaar is the third out of the ten incarnations of God Vishnu. The mention of Varah form has been referred from Rigveda. A tale from Taittiriya Aranyaka (sacred text) describes that a hundred-armed hog lifted up the drowning earth from water. In Ramayana, the hog who lifted up the earth is considered a form of Bramha. In Mahabharata, it is said that Vishnu took the form of a hog and killed the demon Hiranakashyapa in people's or the world's interest. (Pandey 2010:50) –

## VARAHARUPAMASTHAYA HIRANYAKSHONIPATITA

Site : Valmiki Nagar  
 Medium : Sandy stone  
 Idol : VarahAvtaar (Pic 7)  
 Age : 10<sup>th</sup> century A.D

The idol of the male-hog found has two arms. The left hand is bend with Shell in it and Bhu-devi (Goddess of Earth) in sitting position is portrayed on it. The right hand is placed on the right thigh. The idol possesses necklace, the sacred thread (Janev), garland, lower body cloth (Dhoti) and waistband. His right leg is placed on ground level and the left leg is placed high on a podium. Mace is portrayed attached to the right side of the idol.

On the basis of the idols found of stationed Vishnu and independent incarnations of Vishnu from the deliberated area we can say that this presents the proof of religious tolerance of then Vaishnav Kings of Valmiki Nagar area of WestChamparan district. The development of sculpture in this era led to the creation of a compatible social, economic and religious environment. This is confirmed by the idols found in this area. The idols of stationed Vishnu and independent incarnations of Vishnu were found ceaselessly from the later Gupta era to the middle ages. From the above descriptions it can be assumed that the idols of Vishnu and the independent incarnations of Vishnu was a major trend.





Fig. 1



Fig. 2



Fig. 3



Fig. 4





Fig. 5



Fig. 6



Fig. 7



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